Jesus: The Hidden Teachings

Anonymous

Introduction

Today we are going to discuss the most famous person who has ever lived. And I want you to really sit with that for a moment because there are about two billion people in the world today who believe that Jesus is God. Not a prophet, not a teacher, not a wise man, but literally God in human form. And so the question that we need to ask is why? There have been many famous individuals throughout history. Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Socrates, Zoroaster, Homer, Buddha, Muhammad. But it is Jesus that most people worship. It is Jesus whose name is invoked in prayers, in hospitals, in wars, in moments of desperation and hope. And the question we will look at today is why did this happen? And what did Jesus actually teach?

Now, before we go further, I need to be clear about what this is and what this is not. This is not a class where I am telling you this is the truth. This is a class about evidence, about asking, does this model explain the world better than other models. We are going to look at what scholars know for certain about Jesus, what the Bible says about Jesus, and then we are going to ask the hard questions about where those two versions diverge. And why? Because here is what I have discovered after years of studying this. The Jesus that two billion people worship today may not be the Jesus who actually lived and taught in first century Palestine. And that gap between the historical figure and the religious icon tells us something profound about how power works, about how empire shaped narratives, and about why certain teachings survive while others are buried.

So, let me tell you where we are going tonight. First, we are going to talk about Christianity itself. What Christians believe and why those beliefs are actually quite strange when you think about them carefully. Then we are going to look at what we know for certain about the historical Jesus, which is surprisingly little. Then we are going to examine what the Bible says about Jesus and why that story has some serious problems. And finally, we are going to piece together what Jesus actually taught based on texts that were hidden for centuries. And we are going to see that his message was radically different from what the church tells us today.

Chapter 1

Christianity: A Strange Belief System

So let us start with Christianity itself because if you want to understand Jesus, you first need to understand what two billion people believe about him today. Now I grew up in Canada and I studied in the United States and so my entire life Jesus was part of the culture. It was part of society. But growing up not being Christian, I really did not understand Christianity. I really did not understand the ideas. So, let us go over some of the major ideas of Christianity. And I want you to listen carefully because once we lay them out, you are going to see how strange they actually are. First of all, it is important to remember that there are many denominations in Christianity. There is Catholic, there is Protestant, there is Orthodox, there is Evangelical, there is Mormon, and dozens of others, and they disagree on many things, sometimes violently, but these are the major ideas that most Christians agree on.

First thing is that Jesus is the son of God and God himself. He is king. He is divine. He is part of what they call the trinity, which means God exists as three persons: the father, the son, and the holy spirit. But these three are somehow also one God. Now, this already is very confusing because if Jesus is the son of God, then how is he also God? And if he is both son and father, then what does that even mean? This is the kind of logical paradox that has caused theological debates for 2,000 years, and we still do not have a clear answer. The second thing Christians believe is that Jesus died for our sins. So remember, according to the Bible, we got kicked out of the Garden of Eden because we disobeyed God and we ate from the tree of knowledge. This was the original sin, the first act of human disobedience. And ever since then, humanity has been stained by sin. So Jesus died on the cross to redeem us, to wash away that sin, to pay the debt that we owed to God. His death was a sacrifice that made salvation possible.

The third thing that Christians believe is that eventually Jesus will return in what is called the second coming. He died. Then he was resurrected after three days. Then he ascended to heaven. But eventually he will return to earth. And this will result in the last judgment in which all individuals are judged whether they will reign in heaven or burn in hell. He will bring heaven to earth and establish God's kingdom forever. Now, here is where Christianity becomes most controversial. And this is the part that most people do not fully understand. What Christianity says is that if you believe in Jesus, if you accept him as your Lord and Savior, you will go to heaven. But if you do not believe in Jesus, you will burn in hell for eternity. And this goes against almost every other religious tradition in the world.

Now all of this is very strange and there are a lot of questions that arise from these beliefs. How does Jesus dying redeem us? Why is belief more important than behavior? Why would a loving God send good people to hell just because they were born in the wrong culture and never heard of Jesus? Why does there need to be a second coming if Jesus already accomplished his mission? And why do we have to worship Jesus if salvation is supposed to be about God's grace, not about our actions? And the standard Christian answer to all these questions is miracle, mystery, and magic. Do not question it, just believe it. Just embrace it. Faith is more important than reason. But in our discussion tonight, we are not going to accept that. We are going to ask questions. We are going to look at evidence, and we are going to try to understand what really happened.

Chapter 2

The Historical Jesus: What We Know

So now let us talk about what we actually know for certain about the historical Jesus. And I want to emphasize this is not what religious people believe. This is what mainstream academic scholars who have spent decades researching the evidence, looking at the Bible, looking at archaeological records, looking at all the writings from that period can agree on with confidence. And here is the uncomfortable truth. We know surprisingly little about Jesus. There are only four things that mainstream scholars agree on with reasonable certainty.

The first thing is that Jesus is born around 4 BCE in a place called Galilee. Now, I know the Bible says he was born in year zero, but that is actually incorrect. The calendar system we use today was created centuries later. And the monk who calculated it made an error. So Jesus was actually born about four years before what we call the year one. He was born in Galilee which was a region in the northern part of what was then the Roman province of Judea. Now Galilee is important because it was by the coast which made it an extremely cosmopolitan region. From an early age, Jesus would have been exposed to different religions, different cultures, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Greek philosophy, Judaism. This was not some isolated backwater. This was a crossroads of civilizations. And that exposure would have shaped his thinking in ways that most Christians do not realize.

The second thing we know for certain is that his teacher was John the Baptist. And John the Baptist was what we call an apocalyptic preacher, meaning he preached about the end times, about the apocalypse, about the day when God would return to earth and establish his kingdom. John's message was essentially this. I will reveal the future to you. And the future is that God is coming and God will destroy the evil people in the world. So right now is your opportunity to redeem yourself from your sins, to start a new life, to repent and be baptized because God is coming and we must prepare for the return of God. That was John the Baptist's message and Jesus was one of his students, one of his disciples. But at some point, Jesus started to create his own following, which suggests that Jesus was preaching a message that was different from John the Baptist. He was not just repeating what his teacher said. He was developing his own interpretation, his own vision, his own understanding of what was coming and what people needed to do to prepare.

The third thing we know for certain is that the Romans crucified Jesus. We know that the Romans killed him and crucifixion was one of the most brutal execution methods

ever devised. The Romans would nail you onto a wooden cross through your wrists and your feet and then leave you hanging there to die. Now, here is what most people do not understand about crucifixion. You do not die from blood loss. You die from asphyxiation. Because you are hanging from your arms, your body weight pulls you down and your lungs cannot expand properly. So, you have to push yourself up on the nails in your feet just to take a breath. And eventually after hours or even days, your legs give out and you suffocate slowly. It is one of the most agonizing ways to die that humans have ever invented. And the Romans reserved crucifixion for specific types of criminals. Really, there were only two categories of people that the Romans would crucify. The first category was thieves and bandits. People considered the lowest type of criminals. The second category was rebels. People who were trying to overthrow the Roman state, people who were seen as threats to Roman authority. So the fact that Jesus was crucified tells us something very important. The Romans saw him as a rebel. They saw him as someone who was threatening their power, their authority, their control over the region. Whether Jesus actually was trying to start a rebellion or whether the Romans just perceived him that way, we do not know. But the method of execution tells us how the Romans categorized him.

The fourth thing we know for certain is that Jesus had a brother named James the Just. And after Jesus died, James inherited the movement. James became the leader of Jesus's followers. And this group was called the Ebionites or sometimes just the poor. And this detail is actually very important for reasons we will discuss later because it tells us that Jesus's original followers had a very different understanding of his message than what Christianity teaches today. So those are the four things we know for certain. Jesus was born around 4 BCE in Galilee. His teacher was John the Baptist. The Romans crucified him and his brother James took over the movement after his death. Everything else, everything about virgin birth, miracles, walking on water, turning water into wine, the resurrection, the ascension, all that comes from texts written decades later by people who never met Jesus. And that should make us very cautious about accepting those stories as historical fact.

Chapter 3

The Biblical Narrative and Its Problems

Now let us look at what the Bible actually says about Jesus because this is what most Christians believe and this is the story that has shaped Western civilization for 2,000 years. First of all, it is important to understand that there are at least four different biographies of Jesus in the Bible. Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John. And they say different things. Sometimes they contradict each other. Sometimes they emphasize different aspects of Jesus's life and message. But there is a main story that emerges and this is what most Christians believe. According to the Bible, Jesus is the son of God. And at this point in history, humanity has disobeyed God. We try to become like God by eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge back in the Garden of Eden. And ever since then, God has been angry at us. We are stained by original sin and we cannot redeem ourselves no matter what we do. So Jesus being the son of God decides he must come to planet Earth and take a human form and sacrifice himself as a scapegoat in order to redeem us in the eyes of God. That is the plan. God sends his son to earth to die so that humanity can be forgiven.

So Jesus is born in Bethlehem to a virgin named Mary. This is important because it establishes that Jesus is not just a normal human. He is divine. His conception was miraculous. Then Jesus grows up and around age 30 he starts his ministry. And what is his ministry? According to the Bible, Jesus goes around healing people. If you touch him, you are cured of cancer. You are cured of diseases. You are cured of blindness and paralysis. He performs miracles constantly. He also casts out demons because according to the Bible, there are demons inside people that possess them and cause them to behave in evil or insane ways. And Jesus can expel these demons and cleanse people. And then he preaches the gospel, the good news. He teaches people how to be good. Basically, he teaches about love and forgiveness and faith and obedience to God. But here is where the story gets complicated. A lot of Jesus's teachings go against Jewish religious authority. Remember, Jesus is living in Judea, which is a Roman province, but the day-to-day administration is run by Jewish priests. And these Jewish priests teach people to follow the law, to follow the Sabbath, meaning do not work on Saturdays, to obey the law of Moses, to keep all the customs and traditions of the Jewish faith. But according to the Bible, Jesus says, "No, what is important is not following the letter of the law, but following the spirit of God. What matters is the condition of your heart, not whether you perform the correct rituals." And this creates a conflict because Jesus is essentially rebelling against the authority of the Jewish priests.

So according to the Bible, the Jewish priests start to plot against Jesus. They see him as a threat to their power, to their authority, to their control over the people. And eventually Jesus is betrayed by one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who identifies Jesus to the Jewish authorities. The Jewish priests detain Jesus and then they hand him over to the Roman authorities. At this point, Pontius Pilate is the Roman governor of Judea. And according to the Bible, Pilate does not really want to kill Jesus. Pilate asks Jesus, "What did you do wrong? Why do the Jewish priests want you executed?" And Jesus refuses to answer. But there is anger from the Jewish people who demand his execution. So according to the Bible, Pontius Pilate washes his hands symbolically saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. It is not my fault." And then he orders Jesus to be crucified. So Jesus is crucified and he dies. His body is taken down and placed in a tomb. But then three days later, he is resurrected. He comes back to life. He appears before his disciples and tells them, "I will come back. I need to go to heaven, but I will return when I am most needed. Before I come back, tell everyone the gospel. Tell them the good news that I have redeemed people from their sins. And here is the crucial part. According to the Bible, Jesus says, "Therefore, it does not matter if you are Jewish or not Jewish. You can all celebrate God. I brought God to you because I have redeemed you from your sins. So, tell everyone the good news." And this is how Christianity begins as a universal religion that says salvation is available to everyone, not just Jews, but everyone who believes in Jesus. This is the official story that you see in the Bible. And this is what most Christians believe. But as we are about to see, there are enormous problems with this story. Problems that most people never think about because they have been taught to accept it on faith.

Now, let us go through the major issues with the Bible's account of Jesus. Because once you start asking questions, the whole narrative starts to fall apart. The first major problem is how does God have a son? How does God produce a son? Are not we all God's children? Why is Jesus different from everyone else? In Greek mythology, the gods come down and impregnate human women. You get demigods like Hercules. But that is not what happened here. The Bible just says that God had a son and we do not know where he came from. It was a miracle. It was mysterious. But not only that, the Bible also says that Jesus is God. So is he the son of God or is he God himself? And if he is both, then what does that even mean? This is what is called the Trinity problem, and Christians have been debating it for 2,000 years without reaching a clear answer.

The second major problem is why does Jesus need to sacrifice himself? How does that resolve the issue? We disobey God and now Jesus will redeem us by dying. But how does that work exactly? What is the logic? If someone sins against me and then a third party punishes themselves, does that somehow make me forgive the original sinner? It does not make sense as a logical or moral system.

The third problem, and this is actually very problematic, is that the Bible is explicit. It says that the Jewish priests plotted against Jesus, and the Jewish priests were responsible for the death of Jesus. And this is problematic because for 2,000 years, Christians have used this as a reason to persecute Jews. You killed our Lord, our Savior. Therefore, you Jews are evil. You are Christ killers. But if you look at Jewish history, this could not have happened for multiple reasons. First of all, let us say that Jesus was rebelling against the Jewish priests. Let us say Jesus was in disagreement with Jewish religious authority. That is not enough reason for the priest to want to kill him. Why? Because within the Jewish tradition, it is okay to argue. It is okay to disagree. It is actually encouraged to debate and question and challenge. At this time in history, there were at least three

major Jewish groups. There were the Sadducees who were the religious nobility, the high priests who controlled the temple. There were the Pharisees who saw themselves as reformers who believed that what mattered was following the law, not just performing rituals. And there were the Essenes who were like monks living in the desert believing that the end times were coming and that people needed to abandon material possessions and prepare for God's arrival. And guess what? All three groups disagreed with each other, sometimes violently. They argued constantly about interpretation, about practice, about authority. So just because you disagree with Jewish authority does not mean they kill you. Disagreement, rebellion, debate is just part of Jewish tradition.

The second piece of evidence that this did not happen is that there were certain customs and laws of the Jewish people. The Jewish people saw themselves as distinct and separate from everyone else because they were God's chosen people. They rested on Saturdays. They did not marry outside their tribe. They did not charge interest when they gave loans to each other. But there was also an unwritten law that was commonly accepted. You do not betray other Jews to non-Jewish authorities. Does that make sense? We can argue among ourselves, but we will not betray each other to Romans or Greeks or any other foreign power. That would be unthinkable because the Jewish people saw themselves as separate and distinct from other peoples. So, I do not think in history we have a case where Jewish people betrayed a fellow Jew to non-Jewish authorities for religious reasons. It just does not fit the pattern of how Jewish communities function.

The third piece of evidence is that remember James the Just, the brother of Jesus. After Jesus died, James stayed in Jerusalem and he was protected by Jewish authorities. Think about that. If Jesus's teachings went against Jewish law and that is why the Jewish priest had him killed, then why was James, who was teaching the same things as Jesus, allowed to stay in Jerusalem and not only allowed to stay, but protected by the Jews? That makes no sense. If the priests were so threatened by Jesus's message that they had to have him executed, why would they protect his brother who was continuing that exact same message? The only logical explanation is that the Jewish priests were not the ones who killed Jesus. Also remember, we have discussed this, the Romans were brutal people. They killed people for no particular reason. They killed people just to maintain order, just to send a message. So the Romans killed Jesus for their own reasons, probably because they saw him as a rebel or potential rebel and that was enough. So I think it is much more likely that the Romans killed Jesus for political reasons, not religious reasons, and that the story about Jewish priests plotting against him was added later to shift blame away from Rome and onto the Jews. Now, why would someone do that? Why would the Bible blame the Jews instead of the Romans? We will get to that, but just hold that question in your mind because it is crucial to understanding how Christianity actually developed.

Now let us continue with the problems in the biblical narrative because there are more. The fourth problem is if Jesus is the son of God, if he is divine, then how can he die? And if he can die, does death have any meaning for him? Because if Jesus knows he is going to be resurrected in three days, then his death is not really a sacrifice, is it? It is more like a temporary inconvenience. For the sacrifice to be meaningful, Jesus would have to genuinely suffer and genuinely risk permanent loss. But if he knows he is coming back, then where is the sacrifice?

The fifth problem is the resurrection. Why would Jesus resurrect himself? What purpose does that serve? According to Christian theology, Jesus died to redeem humanity from sin. So once he is dead, the redemption is complete, right? So why come back?

What is the point of the resurrection? And then the sixth problem is the second coming. Why does Jesus need to come back? If he already redeemed humanity, if he already accomplished his mission, if salvation is now available to everyone who believes in him, then why does there need to be a second coming? What is left to do? And here is another question that bothers me. Why do people have to worship Jesus? If Jesus's mission was to redeem humanity, to restore our relationship with God, then why do we need to believe in him specifically? Why do we need to worship him? Why is it not enough to just be good people? Why does God care whether we acknowledge Jesus or not? These are not trivial questions. These are fundamental logical problems with the entire Christian narrative. And the standard Christian response is miracle mystery magic. Do not question it. Just believe. Have faith. But I reject that because every other religious tradition we have studied this year, Homer, Plato, Zoroaster, Buddha, they all give you logical explanations for how the universe works and what humans should do. They might be metaphorical, they might be symbolic, but they are internally consistent. Christianity is the only major religion that explicitly tells you, do not try to understand, just believe. And that should make you suspicious because when someone tells you do not ask questions, just obey, that is usually a sign that they are trying to control you.

Chapter 4

What Did Jesus Actually Teach?

So given all these problems, given all these contradictions and logical gaps, we need to ask three fundamental questions. First, what did Jesus actually believe? What did he teach? because it is not really clear from the Bible and I am sure Jesus did not preach believe in me and you will be saved. I do not think he said that. I think that was added later by people who wanted to create a religion around him. Second, why did Jesus become so popular? What was it about his message that resonated with people? Because clearly something about what he said and did attracted followers and inspired devotion. So what was that something? Third, why did the Romans kill him? What was the actual reason? Because understanding why Jesus was seen as a threat will tell us what he was really teaching. So, these are the three questions we are going to answer tonight. What did Jesus really believe? Why was he so popular? And why did the Romans kill him? And to answer these questions, we need to look beyond the Bible. Because the Bible was written decades after Jesus died by people who never met him and who had their own agendas.

Now, here is where we start to piece together what Jesus actually taught. And to do this, we need to look at what every poet and prophet that we have studied this semester has taught because there is a consistent pattern. Look at Homer. Look at the Hebrew prophets. Look at Zoroaster. Look at Plato. Look at Buddha. What do they all teach? They all teach variations of the same fundamental truth. There is a source. The source is the divine, the good God, the universe, the monad, whatever name you have for it. And the source emanates and creates the entire universe. Everything comes from the source. Now, our bodies are material. Our bodies come from a process of evolution, from the physical laws of the universe. But our consciousness, our soul is a divine spark and it comes from the source. So after our experience here on earth, after we die, our soul, our spark goes back to the source. And there is a constant cycle of life, death, rebirth until eventually we merge fully with the source. This is what Buddhism teaches. This is what Hinduism teaches. This is what Zoroastrianism teaches. This is what all major religions fundamentally teach. So Jesus was teaching the same truth but for his time and his place and his audience. He was translating this eternal wisdom into language and metaphors that first century Jews and Romans could understand.

But here is the question. If Jesus was teaching what every prophet teaches, then why is he special? Why did his message have such a profound impact? And the answer is because the Roman Empire was particularly evil. Let me explain what I mean by that. Remember before the Roman Empire, we discussed the Iliad and we talked about how during the time of Achilles, people understood that everyone does both good and evil. Achilles does great heroic deeds, but he also betrays Patroclus. He acts out of pride and

rage and that is his downfall. And the lesson of the Iliad is that what is important is to forgive ourselves and to be forgiven by others. Remember when Priam comes to Achilles and kisses his hand and asks for Hector's body back, that act of humility, that act of forgiveness breaks through Achilles's rage and allows him to be human again. But by the time of the Romans, things had changed. The Romans were not conflicted warriors struggling with right and wrong. The Romans were systematic in their brutality. They conquered, enslaved, exploited, and killed on an industrial scale. They built an empire on violence. And they justified it all as bringing civilization and order to barbaric peoples. So, you do not forgive the Romans. You cannot have a moment of human connection with someone who sees you as subhuman, as property, as a resource to be exploited. The Romans had completely dehumanized the people they ruled over. And this created a profound spiritual crisis for the people living under Roman rule. How do you explain the fact that the Romans who are pure evil, who are demonic, are able to conquer the world? How do you explain that? You are a good person. You try to live righteously. You follow the law, but you are a slave. You are oppressed. You have no freedom. How do you find comfort in that? How do you maintain hope when evil triumphs so completely? And that is the question Jesus came to answer. That is the spiritual problem he was trying to solve. And his answer was radical and profound.

So what did Jesus say? Jesus said this. The Romans triumph because the world that we live in is a false world. It is a corpse. It is a dead world. This is not the true world. So those who most embrace death and evil and hatred will win in this world. But this is a false world. What matters is the divine realm, the kingdom of heaven, the world of the spirit. So understand this. The Romans have won by being evil. They have power. They have wealth. They have domination. But in the grand scheme of things, they have lost because they have destroyed their own souls. They are spiritually dead. Think about Achilles. How did Achilles get what he wanted? He betrayed Patroclus, right? He sacrificed his friend to his own pride. But because he knows he did evil, he cannot sleep. He cannot eat. He cannot rest. All he can do is mutilate Hector's body in a futile rage. And that is the Roman way. That is what happens when you build your life on conquest and exploitation. You might have external power, but internally you are tormented. You are haunted by demons. You cannot find peace. What Jesus is telling us is this. I know the world is evil. I know that the rich and the powerful oppress us and we hate them. But use your imagination, use your heart, use your empathy and look into their minds and you can see how tormented they are. See how every day they live with demons that haunt them. How they cannot truly rest. How they hate themselves and they hate the world around them. And when you see that for yourself, what you will realize is they are more pitiful than you are. You may be poor, you may be a slave, but at least you are not haunted by demons. At least your soul is still alive. At least you still have the capacity for love and joy and connection. So if you really want to do good in the world, you have to forgive your enemy. You have to love your enemy because only by loving your enemy can you release your enemy from his demons and that will save the world. This is the core message. The enemies, the people who oppress us, the rich, the powerful, they are Achilles after he has killed Hector. They have everything they wanted, but they are spiritually dead. They are trapped in a prison of their own making and we have to be like Priam. We have to approach them with humility and compassion. We have to kiss their hand and submit before them so that they can be released from their demons. And this will make the world a better place. Not through revolution, not through violence, not through overthrowing the oppressor, but through forgiveness, through love, through

maintaining our own spiritual purity even in the face of evil.

Now, think about how radical this message is. Jesus is telling slaves and poor people and oppressed populations, do not seek vengeance. Do not hate your oppressors. Instead, forgive them, love them, see their suffering. And from the Roman perspective, this is incredibly dangerous. Why? Because if slaves start to see themselves as spiritually superior to their masters, if they stop fearing death, if they stop caring about material wealth and power, then the entire system of control falls apart. Roman power was based on fear and material incentive. They control people by threatening violence and offering rewards. But Jesus is saying none of that matters. The Romans can kill your body, but they cannot touch your soul. They can take away your freedom, but they cannot take away your inner light. And that is why the Romans killed him. Not because he was organizing a military rebellion, but because he was teaching people that Roman power was fundamentally meaningless. He was teaching people to opt out of the entire system of domination by recognizing that this material world is false and temporary. That is subversive. That is threatening. Because if enough people believe that, if enough people stop caring about the rewards and punishments that Rome offers, then Rome has no power over them.

Now, I know what you are thinking. This is all just speculation. How do we know Jesus actually taught this? And the answer is we have evidence. We have texts that were hidden for centuries that show us what Jesus really taught. In 1945 in a place called Nag Hammadi in Egypt, a collection of ancient texts was discovered. These were Christian writings that had been buried around the 4th century, probably to hide them from the Roman Catholic Church, which was systematically destroying any texts that contradicted its official doctrine. And among these texts was something called the Gospel of Thomas. And what I believe is that the Gospel of Thomas records the true teachings of Jesus. Now, why do I believe that? Three reasons. First, the Gospel of Thomas is unique. It has a poetic voice, a spiritual depth that cannot be replicated. Remember the thing about poetry is that it comes from divine inspiration. It is original. It is authentic. When you read the Gospel of Thomas, you can feel that this comes from someone who had genuine spiritual insight. Second, what Jesus teaches in the Gospel of Thomas aligns perfectly with what every other prophet and poet we have studied has taught. It is consistent with Plato, with Homer, with Zoroaster, with Buddha. That consistency suggests we are seeing authentic wisdom, not made-up doctrine. Third, other great thinkers like Dante and Dostoevsky when they go back and try to understand what Jesus really taught, they arrive at the same conclusions that we find in the Gospel of Thomas. That convergence of insight from multiple independent sources is powerful evidence.

So let us look at what the Gospel of Thomas actually says. The Gospel of Thomas begins with this line and he said, "Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death." Now, think about what that means. In the universe, death does not really exist because after you die, your soul goes to the astral plane, to the divine source. Your soul can never die. But you have to recognize that you are a divine spark. You first need to recognize that. Once you recognize that, you become immortal. But if you do not recognize it, then you fear death and that fear keeps you trapped.

Jesus said, "Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished and he will rule over all." This is Plato's allegory of the cave. Remember the prisoner who escapes the cave and sees the real world with sunlight? At first, it is painful. It is confusing. The light blinds him. But if he persists, eventually he sees the truth. And then he returns to the

cave with knowledge and wisdom that the other prisoners do not have. So the spiritual path is painful. It involves confusion and struggle. But if you persist, you will see reality as it truly is. And that knowledge gives you power. Not power over others, but power over yourself.

Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, see the kingdom is in the sky, then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty. And it is you who are that poverty." This is crucial. Jesus is saying, do not believe what religious authorities tell you. The kingdom of heaven is not some physical location you go to after you die. The kingdom is inside of you. It is your consciousness, your divine spark. And when you recognize that spark, when you know yourself, then you realize you are a child of God just as Jesus is. Notice Jesus does not say, "I am the son of God and you are not." He says, "We are all sons of the living father. We are all divine sparks. We all have the same potential." And notice Jesus does not reference the Bible here. He does not talk about Adam and Eve or Moses or David because for him all of that is secondary. What is true is the divine spark in you. Everything else is just stories and rules created by humans.

Jesus saw infants being fed. And he said to his disciples, "These infants being fed are like those who enter the kingdom." And his disciples asked, "Shall we then as children enter the kingdom?" And Jesus said, "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female, one and the same, so that the male not be male, nor the female, female. And when you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness, then you will enter the kingdom." What is Jesus saying here? He is saying we are born into this world and as we grow older we start to believe in the false divisions we see around us. Male and female, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, Roman and slave. These are all constructs. They are not ultimate reality. But when we were infants, we did not see those divisions. We just saw reality as it is. And once we develop our imagination, once we recognize that this world we live in is our hallucination. It is just a projection of our consciousness, then we can take control of this world and that allows us to access the divine. It is through imagination that we access the divine and it allows us to create this world anew. We are able to see eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand. We are able to be our true selves, not the role society has assigned us. And what we will understand is that we are all connected by the divine source. The separation of male and female, Chinese and American, black and white, it is all made up. It is not true. Once we are able to see reality as it truly is, we will understand we are all one and the same. When you make the two one, when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside and the above like the below, we are all interconnected together. We are all part of the same source. This is what Zoroaster taught about Asha and Druj. Asha is the movement towards interconnectedness, the harmony of all things. Druj is the illusion of division, of separation. We have to train ourselves to see the truth through the falsehood.

His disciples said to him, "Show us the place where you are since it is necessary for us to seek it." And he said to them, "Whoever has ears, let him hear. There is light within a man of light and he lights up the whole world. If he does not shine, he is darkness."

Do you see what Jesus is saying? The disciples are asking him, "Tell us how to be like you. Show us where you are. Show us the path." And Jesus says, "Be yourself." There is a light inside of you. Look for that light and shine it into the world. Jesus is not saying, "Follow me." He is not saying, "Worship me." He is saying, "Find your own light." Each person has their own divine spark. And each person has to find it themselves. No one can do it for you.

Jesus said, "I took my place in the midst of the world, and I appeared to them in flesh. I found all them intoxicated. I found none of them thirsty. And my soul became afflicted for the sons of men because they are blind in their hearts and do not have sight. For empty they came into the world and empty too they seek to leave the world but for the moment they are intoxicated. When they shake off their wine then they will repent." What does this mean? Jesus is saying people are drunk. They are intoxicated by the material world, by wealth, by power, by status, by pleasure. They came into this world with nothing. And when they die, they are going to leave with nothing. But right now, they are pursuing all this stuff, this goal, this wealth, this money that they cannot take with them. It seems like they are drunk, like they have lost their minds. They are not thirsty for truth. They are not seeking the divine. They are just chasing illusions. But eventually they will shake off the wine. Eventually they will sober up and realize what is really important.

Jesus said, "If the flesh came into being because of spirit, it is a wonder. But if spirit came into being because of the body, it is a wonder of wonders." Indeed, I am amazed at how this great wealth has made its home in this poverty. This is profound. Jesus is saying the spirit creates the flesh consciousness creates the material world. That makes sense. But if you think the body creates consciousness, if you think this limited material form creates the vast infinite spirit, that would be impossible. How could something so small and limited create something so vast and abundant? And this connects to a beautiful poem by Rumi, the Persian poet who lived centuries later. Rumi also said, "This world is a prison for drunks." And I am sure Rumi never read the Gospel of Thomas, but they are thinking the same thoughts because they are both being inspired by the same divine source. That is how you know this is real wisdom. When people separated by centuries and cultures arrive at the same truth independently.

Jesus said, "The Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge and hidden them. They themselves have not entered nor have they allowed to enter those who wish to. You, however, be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves." Now, this is crucial. Jesus hates organized religion. The Pharisees were Jewish religious leaders, priests who created a hierarchy where they told people only I know the truth, only I have access to God. So you must listen to me and obey me. And what Jesus is saying is they themselves are ignorant because you cannot access knowledge through hierarchy, through priests telling you what to believe. You can only access knowledge by looking into yourself, by finding your own divine spark. So you have to be wise like serpents. Remember it was the serpent who told Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge and Jesus is saying that was good. It is good and natural to seek knowledge even if it means disobeying false authorities, even if it means disobeying false gods. Because the true God, the Monad is pure love, pure compassion, pure forgiveness. He cannot do wrong. He is perfection itself. And if you have the desire to seek knowledge and you believe that knowledge makes you a happier, more fulfilled person, then you should seek knowledge. Even if priests tell you do not do it, because if they tell you not to seek knowledge, it means they are false authorities serving a false god. The real God wants you to grow, to

learn, to explore, to discover. He wants you to use your freedom.

Jesus said, "Whoever has come to understand the world has found only a corpse, and whoever has found a corpse is superior to the world." This is what gets Jesus in trouble. He is saying the Roman Empire, this great empire that stretches across the Mediterranean with its legions and its roads and its laws, it is a corpse. It is dead. It is nothing. It is spiritually empty. And once you recognize this, once you refuse to be impressed by Roman power, once you refuse to comply, once you refuse to give them authority over your soul, they have no power over you. You are free. And that is a threat to the empire. That is why they had to kill him.

Jesus said, "A man had received visitors, and when he had prepared the dinner, he sent his servant to invite the guests. He went to the first one and said, 'My master invites you.' He said, 'I have claims against some merchants. They are coming to me this evening. I must go and give them my orders. I asked to be excused from the dinner.' He went to another and said to him, 'My master has invited you.' He said to him, 'I have just bought a house and am required for the day. I shall not have any spare time.' He went to another and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said to him, 'My friend is going to get married and I am to prepare the banquet. I shall not be able to come. I asked to be excused from the dinner.' He went to another and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said to him, 'I have just bought a farm and I am on my way to collect the rent. I shall not be able to come. I asked to be excused.' The servant returned and said to his master, 'Those whom you invited to the dinner have asked to be excused.' The master said to his servant, 'Go outside to the streets and bring back those whom you happen to meet so that they may dine. Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my father.'" This parable is revolutionary. Jesus is saying the worst people in this world are the rich people, the businessmen, the merchants, the ones who are so busy accumulating wealth and managing their properties that they have no time for the divine feast. Think about today how we are supposed to worship billionaires because they are successful because they have accumulated wealth. What Jesus is saying is no, those are the worst people. Why? Because the divine, the monad has prepared a great feast for us. When we die, when we return to the source, we will experience the greatest happiness, the greatest joy, the most profound peace. The divine is inviting us to this feast. But the business people are saying, "No, I am too busy. I am too busy making money. I am too busy doing evil in this world. I do not want to go to your stupid feast." So, they are the ones who will lose out in the end, even though today we think they have won. That is what Jesus is saying. Do not worry about the rich and the powerful. They may look happy. They may look successful, but they are not. At the end of days when we all return to the source, they are the ones who will not be invited to the grand feast because they chose money over spirit.

Now, at this point in the lecture, one of my students asked a great question. She said, "If God wants us to be creative and seek the spark, how can we really know what we want to do? Do not we need socialization? But if we socialize, will not we be brainwashed to seek materialism? And that is exactly the problem. Your parents, your school, society, they brainwash you to believe that only money matters, only grades matter, only success in worldly terms matters. And the answer is you have to be brave. You have to be true to yourself because you yourself know what is true. If we did not know truth inherently, then Jesus would not matter. Why do two billion people believe in Jesus? Because they know that Jesus spoke the truth. Something in them recognizes it, resonates with it. So listen to your heart. I know it is hard and most of us cannot do it. And that is why in

many traditions like Buddhism and Hinduism, reincarnation is important because maybe in this lifetime we do not figure it out. Maybe in the next lifetime, maybe 50 lifetimes away, but eventually you will figure it out. Eventually, you will figure out that what other people say does not matter because this world we live in is a false world. Eventually, you will figure out that you should do what you believe to be true. And then what you will recognize is, oh, when I actually do what I like, what I enjoy, it makes me a more fulfilled person and it connects me to the divine. You can see this in people's faces. When you meet someone who is chasing money and power, there is something hollow in their eyes. But when you meet someone who is generous, who volunteers their time, who teaches with passion, their face is different. There is a light in them. Remember Achilles? When you do evil, evil comes into you and corrupts your soul. When you do good, good comes into you and brightens your soul and you brighten the world with it.

But how do we know what is right or wrong without education and socialization? The answer is the spark in you. When you love someone and that person loves you back, your spark glows. When you become a teacher and your students learn well, your spark glows. You try different things until you find the things that make your spark glow. And here is the really important idea. Our lives are infinite. Death is like a game reset. You fail at this game, you die, you come back, and you try again. It is your choice. Free will is fundamental. You get to decide what to do with your life. No one is going to force you. When you die, you go back to the astral plane and you are able to reflect on your own life. You see where you succeeded, where you failed, where you grew, where you stagnated, and then you come back and start over. Eventually, you will figure it out. It may take a million years. It may take a thousand lifetimes. Who knows? But eventually, you will figure it out because time is infinite. What is really important to understand is you have to figure it out yourself. No one can teach you. I can give you ideas. Jesus can tell you what he thinks but you have to discover truth yourself and that is why this is so hard for people to accept because people do not want to accept individual responsibility.

Chapter 5

The Co-optation of Jesus by Empire

Now this creates a huge problem and the Russian novelist Dostoevsky explored this beautifully in his book *The Brothers Karamazov*. There is a section called the Grand Inquisitor and it addresses the fundamental issue that Jesus left unresolved. The problem is this. Jesus says there is a spark inside of you. And it is your responsibility, not an obligation, but a responsibility to let it grow. If you let it grow, you will bring happiness to the world. You will bring happiness to yourself, and you will be able to feast with the divine in heaven. But this is really hard. You have to take individual responsibility. You have to ignore what people around you say. You have to learn for yourself. You have to make mistakes, you have to suffer and grow. So maybe a few thousand people, maybe tens of thousands will love this idea and will have the courage to follow it. But what about the millions of other people who just want to live normal lives? What about the people who do not want this burden of freedom? What can we do about them? And this is what Dostoevsky explores in his story.

Jesus returns to earth during the Spanish Inquisition. People recognize him. He is performing miracles. He is healing people. And everyone is rejoicing. But the Grand Inquisitor, the leader of the Catholic Church, has Jesus arrested. And the Grand Inquisitor has a conversation with Jesus. He says, "We know who you are. You are Jesus and we are supposed to worship you, but we are going to have to kill you because you are a threat to the happiness of the people." And then the inquisitor explains, he says, "Thou didest not love them at all. Thou who didest come to give thy life for them, instead of taking possession of man's freedom, thou did increase it and burden the spiritual kingdom of mankind with its suffering forever." What he is saying is you came to this world to free people, to tell them there is a spark inside them, that they do not have to be slaves, that they can create their own meaning. But that just confuses people. That traps people in fear and anxiety. Life becomes complicated. Before your teacher would tell you what is good and what is evil. Now the teacher says you decide. It is complete chaos and it creates anxiety in people. People just want to be told what to do. People do not want to be like, "Well, what should I have for dinner?" People do not want to think.

The Inquisitor continues, "Thou didest desire man's free love that he should follow thee freely. In place of the rigid ancient law, man must hereafter with free heart decide for himself what is good and what is evil, having only thy image before him as his guide. But did thou not know that he would at last reject even thy image and thy truth if he is weighed down with the fearful burden of free choice? They will cry aloud at last that the truth is not in thee. For they could not have been left in greater confusion and suffering than thou has caused laying upon them so many cares and unanswerable problems." So

the inquisitor is saying your freedom is only good for the minority of people who can think for themselves who aspire to the divine. What about everyone else? What of the rest? How are the weak ones to blame? Because they cannot endure what the strong have endured. How is the weak soul to blame that it is unable to receive such terrible gifts? Can thou have simply come to the elect and for the elect? But if so, it is a mystery and we cannot understand it. And if it is a mystery, we too have a right to preach a mystery and to teach them that it is not the free judgment of their hearts, not love that matters, but a mystery which they must follow blindly, even against their conscience.

So what the grand inquisitor is saying is this. We understand that Christianity creates complete chaos. People do not understand what your true teachings are. And if people do not understand, they do not have to follow it. They do not have to think for themselves. So we create complete chaos deliberately so that people would be forced to obey us. We corrupted your teachings. We have corrected thy work and have founded it upon miracle, mystery, and authority. And men rejoiced that they were again led like sheep and that the terrible gift that had brought them such suffering was at last lifted from their hearts. Were we right teaching them this? Do we not love mankind so meekly, acknowledging their feebleness, lovingly lightening their burden, and permitting their weak nature, even sin, with our sanction? Why hast thou come now to hinder us? Do you understand what he is saying? The church understands that there is evil in the world. And they are saying that evil exists because people do not want to think for themselves. So you need evil people to command people, to enslave people, to force them against their will. Now people can say, "Well, I do not have a choice. I cannot think for myself." Sorry. If you give people complete freedom, it will be complete chaos in the world. That is why there is Satan. That is why Satan must rule this world. Satan creates order through fear and authority. The church says, "We pretend to worship Jesus, but actually we worship Satan. We become the evil empire." The Roman Empire is dead, but now the Catholic Church is the evil empire. And we are going to go around enforcing the law on people, persecuting those who disobey so that everyone can live in peace. People want to be sheep and people have the right to be sheep. So, we are going to be the shepherds. We will be Satan. We will enforce goodness on people whether they like it or not. And this is good for people because now they do not have to accept individual responsibility. If my life sucks, it is not because of me. It is because of the devil. It is because of the Catholic Church. It is because of Satan. And that is what is good.

So the inquisitor finishes his argument and he waits for Jesus to respond. He wants Jesus to argue with him to defend himself to explain why freedom is worth the suffering. But Jesus says nothing. He simply walks up to the old man and softly kisses him on his bloodless aged lips. That is all. That is his answer. The old man shudders. His lips move. He goes to the door, opens it, and says to Jesus, "Go and come no more. Come, not at all. Never. Never." And he lets him out into the dark alleys of the town. The prisoner goes away. And the kiss glows in the old man's heart, but the old man adheres to his idea. Do you see what happened? The inquisitor has great arguments. He is right in a way. His logic is sound. And he asks Jesus, "What is your response?" And Jesus's response is, "I forgive you. I love you. And I forgive you." Just like Priam did to Achilles. By kissing the Inquisitor rather than fighting him, Jesus wins. The Inquisitor knows he is lost. He knows he has been humbled. So, he lets Jesus go, saying, "Just get out of here. Please do not bother us again. This is not your world. This is Satan's world." The kiss glows in his heart, but the old man adheres to his ideas. Jesus did not change the old man's mind, but there is a spark in him that now glows. The spark that he tried to

kill with reason with evil is still there. And that is the power of forgiveness. Even though the Inquisitor seems to be the most evil person in the world, even though he has built an entire system of oppression and control, as long as Jesus shows him the possibility of love, the spark will glow.

So, the Inquisitor poses this problem. People do not want free will. People lack the courage to think for themselves. What is the solution? And the solution is the soul is eternal. We are talking about millions of years. Maybe not in 50 years will people figure it out, but in a million years they will. And Jesus and God and the divine source are patient. They are loving. They are forgiving. They are generous. They are compassionate. So take your time. What is important is that people learn for themselves. Eventually, you will figure out that being a slave sucks. Eventually, you will figure out that watching Netflix and playing video games all day is not fulfilling. Eventually, you will figure out that going outside and creating and loving and connecting is more fun. Eventually, you will figure it out. It may take a million years. Who knows? But eventually, you will because time is infinite and you have to figure it out yourself. No one can teach you. I can give you ideas. Jesus can tell you what he thinks, but you have to figure it out yourself. And that is why this is so hard for people to accept. People do not want to accept individual responsibility, but that is the only path to genuine freedom and genuine fulfillment.

Now, let us address the question that has been hanging over this entire discussion. Why did Jesus have to kill himself? What is the logic of that? It makes no sense. Traditionally, the Catholic Church taught something called ransom theory. They said when we sinned, we became slaves of Satan. So Jesus made a deal with Satan. Jesus said, "I would die and you can take my body and in exchange you have to free my people." And Satan agreed because he thought it was a good deal, God, in exchange for all these slaves. But the thing is Jesus when he died and freed us could never truly die because he is divine. So Satan got tricked. We were freed from Satan and now we are supposed to be slaves to Jesus instead. And that is why we must worship Jesus. But Dante said, "No, no, no. That cannot possibly be right. God did not come to free us so that we become slaves to God. God came to free us so that we could be free."

So Dante in the divine comedy has a conversation between himself and Beatrice his beloved guide in heaven and they discuss the nature of the universe and why Jesus had to die. Beatrice says the greatest gift in the magnanimity of God as he created the gift most suited to his goodness. The gift that he most prizes was freedom of will. So the underlying principle of the universe is freedom. If God is love and he loves people, then he must trust people. Therefore, freedom of will is the most important principle. Same thing if you are a parent. If you truly love your child, you will let your child go and make their own mistakes. You will not protect your child from everything. Even if it means your child might get hurt, you have to let them go. You have to let them explore because true love means trusting other people.

Dante asked Beatrice. But why did God choose precisely this pathway for redemption? Why did Jesus have to die? And Beatrice says this ordinance is buried from the eyes of everyone whose intellect has not matured within the flame of love. In other words, stop thinking with your mind and feel with your heart. Let the divine spark glow in you and then you will see the truth for yourself. She continues, the goodness that has banished every envy from itself burns in itself and sparkling so it shows eternal beauties. All that derives directly from this goodness is everlasting since the seal of goodness is an imprint that never alters. God is perfect. He is forever good, forever love, forever compassion,

forever forgiveness. And there is a spark of God in us, the divine spark, which is our heart. So there is always this perfection in us. But only man's sin annuls man's liberty and makes him unlike the highest good. So that in him the brightness of its light is dimmed. Even though the spark is forever in us, we can cover it up with mud. We can cover it up with darkness. We can forget about it. How? By doing evil. By disobeying our true nature. The more evil we do, the more we forget the spark and it dims in us. But the spark will always be there. It can never be destroyed.

Dante continues, "Man in his limits could not recompense for no obedience. No humility he offered later could have been so deep that it could match the heights he meant to reach through disobedience. Man lacked the power to offer satisfaction by himself." What does this mean? When we disobey God, when we try to become like God by eating from the tree of knowledge, we committed an offense that we cannot compensate for. You tried to be God. You tried to kill God. So you cannot ever ask for forgiveness for that. The offense is too great. But Beatrice says, "Therefore, God had to show greater generosity in giving his own self that man might be able to rise than if he simply pardoned. For every other means fell short of justice, except the way whereby the Son of God humbled himself when he became incarnate." So here is the problem. God has to forgive us, but he has to forgive us in a way that allows us to learn from our mistakes and become better people. If God just forgives us without any consequence, we will not learn anything. We just keep sinning.

So, let me give you an analogy. I am a father and I have a daughter named Eve and I have a dog. And I say to Eve, "I love you, Eve, so much." And Eve says, "Do you love me or do you love the dog more?" I say I love you both equally. Love is infinite. Of course, I love you, but I also love the dog. And Eve thinks, "Yeah, but how do I know he truly loves me?" So, what does Eve do? She kills the dog. And then Eve says to me, "Hey, do you love me or do you love the dog more?" Now, I am stuck because if I punish her, that shows her I love the dog more. But if I do not punish her, she is going to do this again. She is going to kill another animal. So what do I do? What God decides to do is this. The only way out of this conundrum, the only way out of this paradox is if I punish myself because I should have communicated better. I should have shown her more clearly how much I loved her. So what I do is I take a whip and I hit myself. And Eve watches this. And now Eve knows, first of all, I do love her because I am punishing myself for her sake. And second of all, she will not do it again because she does not want to see me suffer. She is horrified by what she has caused. And that is why Jesus had to kill himself. God had to punish himself so that we would be humbled by the sacrifice. We would feel so much remorse and regret for causing God to die that we would never ever disobey again. We would never ever try to become God ourselves. And because of this, Jesus freed us from the evil in us and led us to the path of good. Because now all we have to do is remember Jesus, remember what he said, remember what he taught, and we will forever be on the path towards the light.

Now, another student asked, "Can someone who has done extreme evil be forgiven? If someone kills your daughter and then goes to prison, can they be forgiven?" And the answer is yes. Because the only way for this world to work is if people are allowed to be forgiven. If people are not allowed to be forgiven, this entire world, this entire universe breaks down. That is why God is a God of forgiveness. If we do not have forgiveness, what world do we live in? We live in a world of vengeance. If you kill my daughter, then I have to kill your daughter. And then you are going to kill my family and I have to kill your family. It becomes an endless cycle of violence and hatred. The only way

for this world to work, the only way for justice to prevail is if we are allowed to forgive each other. And previously, we did not have the tools to forgive each other because we ourselves lacked wisdom. But now with the arrival of Jesus, we remember that if Jesus forgives us, we can forgive ourselves. And if we can forgive ourselves, we can forgive others. But just because you believe in Jesus does not mean you will not go to prison for killing someone. You are still going to go to prison. Justice will still be served. But now you can forgive yourself. And that is essential for your spiritual growth and for society's healing. The only way for you to move on in your life, the only way for society to move on is if you are able to forgive yourself. In a world with no forgiveness, this world would break down really quickly because everyone would just seek revenge forever.

And here is what Dante teaches us. You are thinking with your head. When you grow older and your heart matures and you have more life experience, you will be able to feel your heart. And once you feel your heart, all this will make sense to you.

So now Dante explains why are we here? What is the purpose of the universe? Dante asks, "If God is perfect and everything he creates is perfect, then why do we die? Why is there corruption and decay?" And the answer is God is perfect. He creates perfection. But he creates the laws of the universe. He creates the game that is perfect. But the things within the game enter a cycle of destruction and life, life and death because that is the only way for the game for the universe to work properly. The laws of the universe are created and perfect. But your life is breathed forth immediately by the chief good who so enamors it of his own self that it desires him always. So you can deduce your resurrection, you need. But remember, the way in which human flesh was fashioned when both of the first parents were created. The world that we live in is a world in which we can make mistakes, in which we can learn and grow. And we do not have to worry about making mistakes because when we die, we just return to the source and we will be reincarnated. We will come back. Jesus was resurrected and we will be resurrected as well. We have infinite opportunity to grow as souls and that is the purpose of life: to learn, to make mistakes, to be creative, to imagine new possibilities. That is why we were created and to ensure that we can continue to grow, there is death. Death allows for a reset. Death allows us to rejuvenate ourselves and learn from mistakes. So do not think about this lifetime. Think about all possible lifetimes and live your life accordingly. Make the most of your life here by making as many mistakes as possible because only by making mistakes can you actually grow as a soul.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: The Light That Never Dies

Now, let us look at what the Bible itself says because there are passages that confirm what we have been discussing even though the church tries to bury their significance. There is a famous section called the sermon on the mount where Jesus stands on a hill and preaches to the crowd and he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This is his message to people. What matters is the spark inside of you. It does not matter how wealthy you are. It does not matter how powerful you are. In fact, it is probably those who are slaves, those who are poor, those who suffer, who are more virtuous, and they will inherit the kingdom.

Jesus continues, "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven." Be the light. Every one of you has a light in you. Every one of you has power to change the universe. Every one of you has power to do good in this world.

And then the most radical teaching. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be children of your father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that. And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that. Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect." We are in this world to do as much good as possible. Thank evil people because they give you opportunity to do good. If there is no evil in the world, how do you possibly do good? This is the test. This is the purpose.

Jesus continues, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and vermin destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures

in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be." Also focus on your own spiritual enlightenment. Focus on making your heart pure, good and virtuous. Do not worry about money and material things because when you die, you cannot take these things with you. But your heart will always follow you wherever you are.

And then Jesus says, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." This is crucial. What is Satan? Satan is money. It is power. It is the material world. This world belongs to Satan. This world is ruled by Satan. There is nothing you can do about it. When you leave this world, that is the world of God. So, it is your choice. You can be Elon Musk. You can have all this wealth in this world, but we will see what happens after he dies.

And finally, Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.'" This is the most important teaching. The Christian religion tells us that you must believe in Jesus to be saved. All that matters is belief in Jesus. Does not matter what you do. Does not matter what you say. What matters is your belief. And what Jesus himself is telling us is no, no, no. Do not use my name. Do not follow me. Follow your heart. In fact, if you use my name, it is because you mean to do evil in this world. The church says, "Worship Jesus and you will be saved." Jesus says, "Do not worship me. Do good. Be good. Find your own light." So the question is how do we get from this teaching to the Catholic Church which says you must obey us or you will be condemned to hell. How did that transformation happen? And the answer is the Catholic Church was created by the Roman Empire not by Jesus.

This is the crucial insight that changes everything. After Jesus was killed, his brother James led the original movement in Jerusalem. These were the Ebionites, the poor. They followed Jesus's actual teachings. They believed Jesus was a prophet, not God. They believed in doing good works, not just believing. They continued to follow Jewish law, but with Jesus's emphasis on inner transformation. But then something happened. The Roman Empire, which had killed Jesus, realized something. They realized that Jesus's message was spreading. People were finding hope in his teachings. And the Romans understood that they could not stop it by killing more people. That would just create more martyrs. So they did something brilliant and evil. They co-opted the movement. They took control of it. They changed the message. They transformed Jesus from a rebel teacher into a symbol of obedience. How did they do this? Through a man named Paul. Paul never met Jesus. Paul was a Roman citizen who had persecuted Christians. But then he claimed to have a vision, a conversion experience. And Paul started preaching a very different version of Christianity. Paul said, "Forget about good works. Forget about following the law. All that matters is believing that Jesus is God and that he died for your sins." Paul took Jesus's message of inner transformation and turned it into a religion of belief and obedience. And the Roman Empire loved this. Why? Because Paul's version of Christianity was useful to the empire. It told slaves to obey their masters. It told people to pay their taxes. It told people to submit to authority because all authority comes from God. By the 4th century CE, the emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. And at the council of Nicaea in 325 CE, the

empire decided which texts would be included in the Bible and which would be destroyed. The Gospel of Thomas was buried. The Ebionite texts were destroyed. Any teaching that suggested Jesus was just a human prophet, any teaching that emphasized individual spiritual growth over institutional obedience was eliminated. And the story about Jewish priests killing Jesus was emphasized and exaggerated. Why? To shift blame away from Rome and onto the Jews. Because if people believed the Romans killed Jesus, they might resist Roman authority. But if they believed the Jews killed Jesus, then the Romans were innocent and the Jews became the eternal scapegoat. This is how the Catholic Church was born. Not from Jesus, but from the Roman Empire, using Jesus's name to maintain control.

So now we can see the complete story. Jesus was a Jewish teacher who learned from John the Baptist but developed his own message. His message was that this material world ruled by empires and violence is false. The true reality is spiritual and each person has a divine spark that connects them to the ultimate source of love and truth. Jesus taught that the way to activate this spark is through love, forgiveness, compassion, and inner transformation. He taught that the rich and powerful who seem to rule this world are actually spiritually dead. They are trapped in their own evil. And the poor and oppressed who seem powerless are actually free because they can still access the divine. This message was incredibly dangerous to Rome because it told people that Roman power was ultimately meaningless. So the Romans killed Jesus by crucifixion, the most brutal execution method they had reserved for rebels and threats to the state. But Jesus's message did not die, it spread. And the Romans realized they needed to control it. So they co-opted it. They created the Catholic Church. They changed Jesus's teachings. They made it about belief and obedience instead of inner transformation. They destroyed the texts that preserve Jesus's real teachings like the Gospel of Thomas. They created a new narrative that blamed the Jews for killing Jesus instead of the Romans. They made Jesus into God instead of a teacher showing us our own divinity. And for 2,000 years, this false version of Christianity has dominated the Western world. Billions of people worship Jesus without understanding what he actually taught. They believe they need to believe in Jesus to be saved. When Jesus himself said, "Do not follow me, follow your own heart."

So what do we do with this information? How does this change how we live? First, we need to understand that institutional religion, especially when it is allied with state power, is not about spiritual truth. It is about control. The Catholic Church, the mega churches, the televangelists who tell you to believe and obey and donate, they are continuing the Roman strategy of using Jesus's name to maintain power. Second, we need to reclaim Jesus's actual message. The divine spark is in you. Not in a church, not in a priest, not in a ritual, but in you. Your purpose is to grow that spark through love, creativity, compassion, forgiveness. Your purpose is to see through the illusions of this material world and recognize your connection to the eternal source. Third, we need to take responsibility for our own spiritual growth. No one can do it for you. Not Jesus, not Buddha, not any teacher or prophet. They can point the way, but you have to walk the path yourself. You have to make mistakes. You have to learn. You have to grow. Fourth, we need to forgive. Forgive yourself for your mistakes. Forgive others for their mistakes. Forgive the people who oppress you because they are trapped in their own spiritual death. Forgiveness does not mean accepting evil. It means refusing to let evil control you. Fifth, we need to recognize that time is infinite. This one lifetime is just one experiment, one attempt. If you fail, if you spend this life chasing money and power

and realize at the end that it was empty, that is okay. You will get another chance and another and another. Eventually, you will figure it out. Sixth, we need to build our lives around what makes our spark glow. When you are doing something and you feel alive, connected, purposeful, joyful, that is your spark glowing. Follow that feeling. Build a life around that. Do not chase what society tells you to chase. And finally, we need to love our enemies. This is the hardest teaching, the most radical teaching, but it is the key to everything. The people who oppress you, who exploit you, who seem evil, they are suffering more than you are. They are trapped. They are spiritually dead. If you hate them, you join them in that death. If you love them, you might free them, and you will definitely free yourself.

So, that is the complete story of Jesus. Not the story the church tells you, but the story based on evidence, based on texts that were hidden for centuries, based on the teachings of prophets and poets who understood the same eternal truths. Jesus was not God. Jesus was a human being with a divine spark just like you. But Jesus figured out how to make that spark glow so brightly that 2,000 years later, we are still talking about him. Jesus did not die for your sins. Jesus died because he was a threat to the Roman Empire because he taught people that imperial power was meaningless and that inner freedom was everything. Jesus did not found Christianity. The Roman Empire founded Christianity using Jesus's name to create a religion of obedience and control. Jesus's actual message was this. You have a divine spark. This world is false. The true reality is spiritual and eternal. Grow your spark through love, forgiveness, compassion, creativity. Do not worship me. Do not follow me. Find your own light and shine it into the world. That message was so powerful, so dangerous, so transformative that the empire had to bury it. They had to replace it with a safe, controllable version. But the truth survived in hidden texts, in the insights of great thinkers, in the hearts of people who recognized authentic wisdom when they heard it. And now you know, you know what Jesus actually taught. You know why the empire had to kill him and co-opt his message. You know that the divine spark is in you waiting to be awakened. The question is, what will you do with this knowledge? Will you continue to follow the Empire's version of Christianity, the version that tells you to believe and obey, or will you follow Jesus's actual teaching, the teaching that tells you to think and grow and love and shine your light into the world? The choice is yours. It has always been yours. That is what Jesus came to tell us. We are free. The spark is in us. And no empire, no matter how powerful, can ever take that away.

So go forward with this knowledge. Question everything. Think for yourself. Love your enemies. Forgive yourself. Make mistakes. Learn. Grow. And remember that your spark connects you to every other spark to the eternal source of all love and truth. That is the complete story of Jesus. That is what he actually taught. And that is why two billion people worship him today. Even though most of them do not understand what he was really saying, but you understand now. You have seen through the illusion. You have found the truth. Now it is time to live it.